

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TAGS: EGEN, EEC, UK

SUBJECT: FURTHER BRITISH PRESS REACTION TO THE EC
SUMMIT

REF: LONDON 16173

1. EDITORIAL COMMENT IN THE QUALITY BRITISH PRESS OF
DECEMBER 12 CAST A POSITIVE LIGHT ON THE RESULTS OF
THE EC SUMMIT, ESPECIALLY ON THE PROGRESS THAT WAS
MADE ON THE PROBLEM OF BRITAIN'S EC BUDGET CONTRIBU-
TION. HOWEVER, A NUMBER OF EDITORIALS NOTED THAT
THINGS COULD STILL GO WRONG WHEN THE GOVERNMENT
SUBMITS THE RESULTS OF RENEGOTIATION TO THE BRITISH
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ELECTORATE.

2. THE TIMES CALLED THE SUMMIT "A CHRISTMAS STOCKING WITH MODEST GIFTS FOR EVERYONE." THE PACKAGE AS A WHOLE REPRESENTS PROGRESS FOR THE COMMUNITY. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, RENEGOTIATION NOW LOOKS MORE LIKE A NIGGLING NUISANCE THAN A MAJOR PROBLEM." WILSON HAS GONE AS FAR AS HE CAN TOWARD COMMITTING HIMSELF TO RECOMMENDING SATISFACTORY TERMS, AND HE IS THEREFORE GETTING MORE UNDERSTANDING FROM THE OTHER MEMBER STATES. BUT THINGS "COULD STILL GO WRONG," IN RENEGOTIATION ITSELF OR, MORE LIKELY, IN THE REFERENDUM. THERE IS STILL STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE COMMUNITY IN CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE BRITISH ELECTORATE. ALSO, A SENSE OF GENERAL DISSATISFACTION COULD CAUSE EITHER A LOW TURNOUT OR A BIG NEGATIVE VOTE DIRECTED MORE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DAY THAN THE COMMUNITY."

3. THE FINANCIAL TIMES SAID THAT THE CAUTIOUS PUBLIC REACTION OF WILSON AND CALLAGHAN TO THE SUMMIT RESULTS (SEE REFTEL) MAY SEEM "UNGENEROUS" IN RELATION TO WHAT WAS ACHIEVED AT THE MEETING. IT IS MORE READILY EXPLICABLE IN TERMS OF UK DOMESTIC POLITICS. PREJUDICE AGAINST MEMBERSHIP HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED BY WIDESPREAD MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ITS EFFECTS. "THIS PREJUDICE AND THESE MISCONCEPTIONS WILL HAVE TO BE REMOVED BEFORE A MAJORITY VOTE OF THE ELECTORATE IN FAVOR OF CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP CAN BE SECURED."

4. THE GUARDIAN CALLED THE SUMMIT "MORE CONSTRUCTIVE THAN ITS PREDECESSORS." IT NOTED THAT "THERE IS OFTEN A CLASH BETWEEN A NEGOTIATING ROLE, WHERE DIFFICULTIES MUST BE EMPHASIZED, AND A POLITICAL ROLE, WHERE THE COUNTRY MUST BE OFFERED A VISION." IF THE UK IS TO STAY IN THE COMMUNITY, WILSON WILL HAVE TO "SELL AT HOME AS WELL AS BARGAIN ABROAD."

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